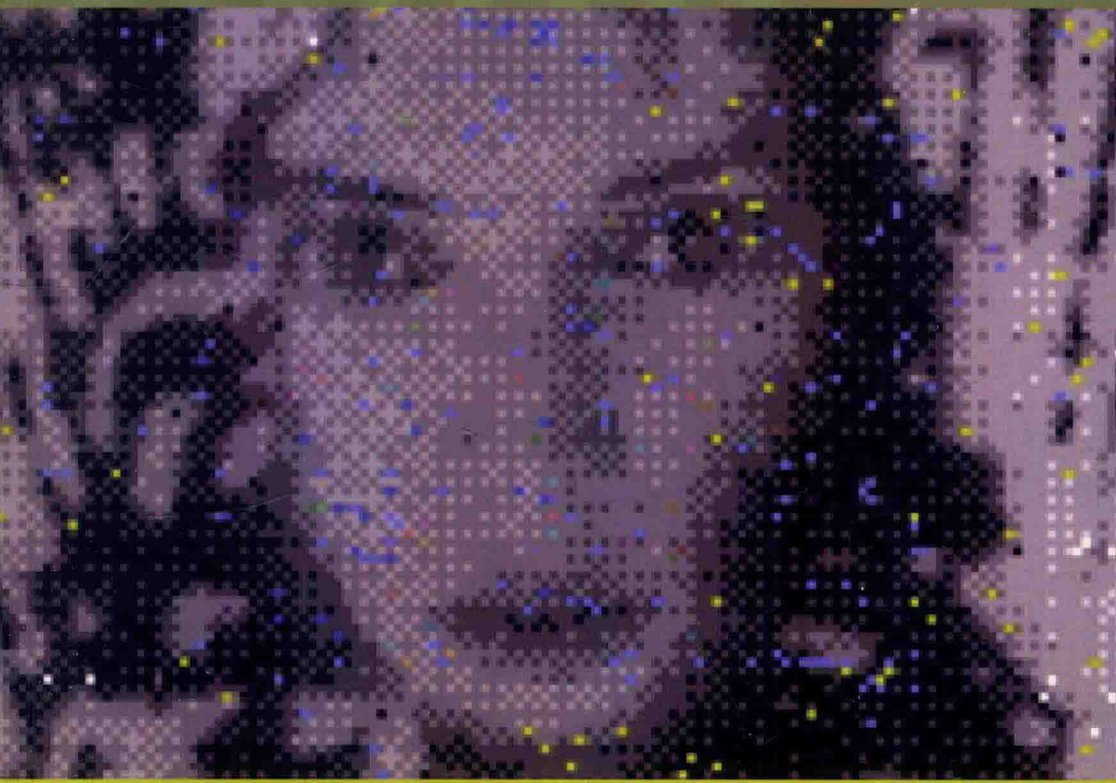
identity technologies



CONSTRUCTING THE SELF ONLINE

edited by Anna Poletti
and Julie Rak

Identity Technologies

Constructing the Self Online

Edited by
ANNA POLETTI *and* JULIE RAK

常州大学图书馆
藏书章

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN PRESS

Publication of this volume has been made possible, in part, through support from the Anonymous Fund of the College of Letters and Science at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

The University of Wisconsin Press
1930 Monroe Street, 3rd Floor
Madison, Wisconsin 53711-2059
uwpress.wisc.edu

3 Henrietta Street
London WC2E 8LU, England
eurospanbookstore.com

Copyright © 2014
The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any format or by any means, digital, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, or conveyed via the Internet or a website without written permission of the University of Wisconsin Press, except in the case of brief quotations embedded in critical articles and reviews.

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Identity technologies : constructing the self online / edited by Anna Poletti and Julie Rak.
pages cm — (Wisconsin studies in autobiography)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-299-29644-5 (pbk. : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-0-299-29643-8 (e-book)
1. Autobiography. 2. Online identities. 3. Identity (Psychology) and mass media.
4. Online social networks. 5. Internet—Social aspects. I. Poletti, Anna, editor.
II. Rak, Julie, 1966–, editor. III. Series: Wisconsin studies in autobiography.
CT25.I34 2014
302.3—dc23
2013011469

Identity Technologies

Wisconsin Studies in Autobiography

William L. Andrews
General Editor

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com

Acknowledgments

We absolutely must thank Bill Andrews, who invited us to begin this project, supported us through it, and encouraged us to think big. We also thank Raphael Kadushin, Matthew Cosby, and the rest of the team at the University of Wisconsin Press for their stewardship of the project over many years. Thanks to the editorial board of the press for their suggestions and support. We thank Katherine Durnin for her sensitive translation of Philippe Lejeune's work.

We also thank Lauren Berlant, who has been unfailingly supportive, provocative, generous, and hospitable to us as individuals and as a team. Thanks also to Nicole Matthews, an Australian ally for the interdisciplinary nature of the project. Thanks to Susan Brown, Linda Warley, and Aimée Morrison for their assistance early in the process. As always, we thank our colleagues in the International Association for Biography and Autobiography (IABA) for their enthusiasm. We thank Arpit Gutpa, Priit Kasesalu, and Jaan Tallinn, the original inventors of Skype, without whom this project would have been impossible.

Julie particularly wants to thank Danielle Fuller for her constant encouragement, wisdom, and love throughout this project, and Mr. T. for being supportive in the feline sense.

Anna would like to thank Johannes Klabbers for his technical troubleshooting, humor, and optimism. She also thanks Amanda Kerley, and Stripe.

Anna received financial assistance for participation in the project from the Faculty of Arts, Monash University, who provide excellent support for early career researchers. Julie received support from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta.

We thank all our contributors for their work and their patience. Thanks particularly to our contributors who graciously gave permission to reprint essays in this collection.

"Beyond Anonymity, or Future Directions for Internet Identity Research," by Helen Kennedy, was first published in *New Media and Society*, Sage Publications, vol. 8, no. 6 (2006): 859–76. Reproduced with permission and copyedited for inclusion in this volume.

"Cyberrace," by Lisa Nakamura, was first published in *PMLA*, Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America, vol. 123, no. 5 (2008): 1673–2. Reproduced with permission.

"Negotiating Identities/Queering Desires: Coming Out Online and the Remediation of the Coming-Out Story," by Mary L. Gray, was first published in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, International Communication Association, vol. 14 (2009): 1162–89. Reproduced with permission.

Contents

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction: *Digital Dialogues*
ANNA POLETTI *and* JULIE RAK 3

FOUNDATIONS

Beyond Anonymity, or Future Directions for Internet Identity Research
HELEN KENNEDY 25

Cyberrace
LISA NAKAMURA 42

Becoming and Belonging: *Performativity, Subjectivity, and the Cultural Purposes of Social Networking*
ROB COVER 55

Virtually Me: A *Toolbox about Online Self-Presentation*
SIDONIE SMITH *and* JULIA WATSON 70

IDENTITY AFFORDANCES

Adultery Technologies
MELISSA GREGG 99

Facebook and Coaxed Affordances
AIMÉE MORRISON 112

Archiving Disaster and National Identity in the Digital Realm: *The September 11 Digital Archive and the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank*
COURTNEY RIVARD 132

Life Bytes: *Six-Word Memoir and the Exigencies of Auto/tweetographies*
LAURIE MCNEILL 144

MEDIATED COMMUNITIES

Negotiating Identities/Queering Desires: *Coming Out Online and the Remediation of the Coming-Out Story*
MARY L. GRAY 167

"Treat Us Right!": *Digital Publics, Emerging Biosocialities, and the Female Complaint*
OLIVIA BANNER 198

Cyber-Self: *In Search of a Lost Identity?*
ALESSANDRA MICALIZZI 217

Homeless Nation: *Producing Legal Subjectivities through New Media*
SUZANNE BOUCLIN 229

REFLECTIONS

Autobiography and New Communication Tools
PHILIPPE LEJEUNE, *translated by* KATHERINE DURNIN 247

The Blog as Experimental Setting: *An Interview with Lauren Berlant*
ANNA POLETTI *and* JULIE RAK 259

Contributors 273
Index 279

Identity Technologies

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com

Introduction

Digital Dialogues

ANNA POLETTI *and* JULIE RAK

This collection is an experiment in interdisciplinary dialogue. As scholars of autobiography, we are intensely interested in the rise of autobiographical discourse in contemporary culture. Nowhere is the power and diversity of the autobiographical more visible than online, where it is the raison d'être for many of the activities and practices associated with Web 2.0, and where acquiring and maintaining online identities make up the core activities of many users. Research into how identity is presented online is occurring in a number of fields, such as auto/biography studies (a widely used term for the study of autobiography, biography, and life writing), communications and new media studies, cultural studies, education, game studies, psychology, and sociology. Each field draws upon its own methods and prominent theorists to gather data and analyze the diverse range of identity technologies that have become available. Each field, too, rests on a confidence in the methods and approaches it deploys to undertake this research, and how the key questions and issues raised by the spread of identity technologies are to be identified and defined.

As our individual research interests have led us further into the analysis and theorizing of online identity, we have become excited by the prospect of creating a bridge between auto/biography studies and media studies, which could be mutually beneficial to researchers in both fields. The aim of this bridge is to productively challenge a founding assumption, or tendency, in each field, using the approaches and ways of thinking of the other in order to problematize "identity" as a frame through which to examine online texts and practices. To do this, we have included a mix of new and established scholarship on the topic of online identity from the areas of media studies, sociology, cultural studies, and auto/biography studies. This variety of approaches brings together a range of examples of how "identity" can be read in order to encourage researchers and students in

the field to revisit the question of what it means to pay attention to identity online. As researchers adapt the methods of their discipline to the expanding field of identity technologies, we must question how preexisting ways of defining, identifying, and interpreting online texts shape not only what is visible as evidence of online identity but also the conclusions drawn about that evidence. We realize that it is not possible to trace the contours of each approach to online identity in their entirety, but we do think that it is possible to think about how the study of online media can benefit from the insights of auto/biography studies about identity construction. In turn, auto/biography studies could benefit from the long engagement scholars from media studies and other disciplines have had with specific aspects of online life. Beyond thinking about specific software packages or hardware designs, this book discusses what it actually means to *be* online and to have an online life, and the ways in which we can study this question in all its complexity. *Identity Technologies* represents one way to approach these issues.

Why Study Online Identity?

It is now commonplace to assume that personal identity work is foundational to the production of social media and even of hardware interfaces. There are many possible reasons for this. One reason involves the connection of Web 2.0—with its insistence on digital forms of participation between individuals—to liberal ideas of subjectivity. Internet subjects can be many things: they can be citizens, consumers, participants, gamers, lurkers, or stalkers, but generally the conditions of Internet subjectivity remain indebted to classic liberalism. Internet users understand themselves to be individuals who are unique, have agency, and exhibit commonly understood forms of consciousness, as discussed by Helen Kennedy in her foundational article (this volume, 25–41). Arguably, the structure of the Internet works to support this understanding of identity, which originated in Europe, spread via various forms of print culture, and became part of Western ideas about what the self is. These assumptions about the subject have continued to travel worldwide, via the grammar of Internet interfaces. Moreover, if these conditions of selfhood are not present, then there are usually traces of active resistance to normative Internet culture present as well (Rak 2005). Therefore, the study of online activity needs to take into account ideas about what identity is, how it is formed, and how stories about identity are made.

We also believe that the understanding of affordances in new media studies should enter the vocabulary of humanist scholars who are interested in studying online practices. In the work of the psychologist J. J. Gibson (1979), an affordance

is an expression of a relationship between an actor (animal or human) and its environment. In *The Psychology of Everyday Things*, Donald Norman adapted the concept for design purposes; for him, an affordance "refers to the perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used" (1988, 14). Designers of computer hardware and software use the idea of affordances to help them design interfaces that can be used efficiently (McGrenere and Ho 2000), but increasingly, Internet designers and media theorists understand affordances to be social (Wellman et al. 2006). Internet affordances help to determine how we will behave online, because they direct us to act in certain ways and even be a certain type of person. The constant directive to "share" personal information on social media sites such as Facebook or Linked In is an example of a media affordance, which asks for users to create a specific type of identity, one that can be shared. In the same way that the genres of life writing such as memoir or diary create the terms within which people create identities, Internet affordances can work (sometimes covertly) to create the terms for identification and the rules for social interaction. Affordances are therefore an important aspect of studying the ideological aspects of the production of online identities and communities.

These two examples of ways to understand online identity production are indicative lines of inquiry that are beginning to converge in the study of digital life, particularly in the areas of auto/biography studies and new media. We believe that it is time for these areas of research to join forces so that we can begin to answer questions about identity that move beyond specific examples of online and digital activity. The development of research into online identity has key studies within it, which already try to bring these areas together. We have included some of these studies here as reprints, and we also have commentaries by established scholars, which reflect on what a confluence between these areas might mean, and essays by emerging scholars who are working on these questions. In this introduction, we present our case for thinking through identity technologies in a way that pays attention to how identity has been theorized and remains open to the new directions that could occasion revisiting common assumptions about identity in an online environment.

In new media studies, future work on identity technologies could be enhanced by attention to the complex relationship between self and self-representation. The *production* of a self through representation is a more complex affair than a conscious performance as commonly argued in new media studies (see, e.g., Papacharissi 2011, 307). On the one hand we agree with, and respect, Nick Couldry's suggestion that in new media studies "understanding digital storytelling as a

broad social phenomenon involves moving beyond such storytelling's status merely as texts or processes of production or distribution. Ever since Lazarsfeld and Merton (1969 [1948]) identified the first and most important question of 'media effects' as the 'effect' of the existence of media institutions as such, media scholars have developed answers to this classic question within a variety of methodological paradigms" (Couldry 2008, 374). There is no doubt that new media studies moved beyond "mere" textual analysis long ago. In the case of online practices where people are representing themselves *through* text—and often through multimedia texts—we must carefully consider the processes of mediation inherent in self-representation. We argue that when it comes to analyzing the effect of self-representational media our analysis must remain attentive to the self as an effect of representation—the affordances, strategies, techniques, and intended audiences—rather than one's identity being expressed through online practices. The extent to which identity is evidenced through online practices relies more on the implicit assumptions underpinning methodologies of reading and interpretation, which treat textual features as facts, than it does on the truth claims of the texts themselves.

We owe this insight to the area of auto/biography studies, which has rigorously critiqued the "givens" of autobiography (literally "self," "life," and "writing"). For example, the idea that the self or personality is expressed in writing has given way to the assumption that identity is in fact a product of the writing or composing process (Ashley et al. 1994; Smith 1998). In some cases, the form of identity expression works to give the writer access to certain kinds of power and knowledge formations, which were not available to him or her before. In other cases, the form of representation constructs the limits of what an identity can be. Collaborative autobiographies, letter writing, and personal zines are all examples of life-writing practices, which create the conditions for some kinds of identity-work but not others. In a similar way, the idea of "writing" as the only way to create documentation about our lives has been expanded to include all kinds of modes of representation. Some genres of writing, for example, are heavily gendered. Others are associated with specific subject positions in structures of power. What is composed, and how, and by whom has come to have intense significance in auto/biography studies itself. And finally, the idea that "life" is a given is also open to question. Who gets to "have" a life worthy of representation? Can one "make" a life from representation, and how does this process work? What are the ethics of representing another's life, and in a posthuman sense, is human life the only life that matters? These kinds of considerations could be brought into productive tension with online media studies work so

that we could work through what affordances such as these have to do with identity construction.

When it comes to self-representation, online media studies approaches to online self-representational practices could do well to incorporate the kinds of insights into the relationship between self and text cultivated in auto/biography studies to tease out the relationship between "the self" and "the self online." So too, the methods for interpreting the interplay between the distribution, reception, embedding, and archiving of self-representation and larger trends in the formulation and recognition of political agency and cultural authority developed in auto/biography studies (e.g., see Smith and Schaffer 2004; and Whitlock 2007) could contribute to current debates in media studies regarding the characteristics and impact of digital storytelling (Couldry 2008). A number of essays in this collection use the insights of auto/biography studies in order to bring together the history of studying what identity is with the productions of identity in a digital environment.

Just as the insights of auto/biography studies about identity and narrative could prove to be very fruitful when we theorize Internet identities and how they are constructed through rapidly developing ideas about personhood, representations of experience, privacy, and data, so auto/biography studies could benefit from the work of media studies on non-narrative forms of identity work. Because the Internet is the site of a convergence of media technologies, it is now possible for users to have many different kinds of media available to them, such as music, video, print, and imaging technologies, and it is also now possible for users to make use of any or all of these technologies at the same time when something is constructed.

However, not all of these types of media depend on narrative to transmit meaning. In fact, some activities that constitute communicative identity-work, such as social media posting, search records, the use of SMS, apps for the handheld devices that locate where you are, or the posting of photographs, do not constitute the building of a narrative at all. And yet these activities and the technological affordances that make certain kinds of identity presentation possible (and others unthinkable) form much of the basis for the advent of auto/biographical discourse in digital media. In some cases, though, we are still using older analytical tools to try to understand this new situation. Self-representation online challenges the tendency to read for narrative, which has been a hallmark of auto/biography studies, and demands a consideration of how researching identity online causes us to rethink the basic assumption that has animated the field to date. One example of this tendency is the persistence of narrative as a frame for understanding how online identity is formed.

Narrative and Identity: Rethinking the Online Connection

In this section, we look at what some of these connections have been, with a view to rethinking that central connection between life and narrative, which has formed much of the basis for auto/biographical theory, in some alternate ways that fit better with what digital media and identity production are about.

In the area of auto/biography studies the connection between narratives as presentations of information in a sequence of events (Lacey 2000, 13) and the concept of "life" as both the represented and performative aspect of identity is long standing.[1] In a recent and explicit articulation of the link between these ideas that summarizes much of the work in the area, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson use "life narrative" in their guide *Reading Autobiography* as a way to describe "autobiographical acts of any sort," which do not have to be written down but can be "written, performative, visual, filmic or digital" (Smith and Watson 2010, 4). "Life narrative" is seen by Smith and Watson as a more accommodating term than autobiography, because it can be about the representation of another person's life as well as one's own, and it also can describe nonwritten forms of self-representation, which are found in new media, including digital media. To this, Smith and Watson connect their sense of "identity" as a discursive construction of available models, which autobiographers (and others) use in their narratives. These models do not necessarily preexist the writing or composing subject but are historically specific, culturally marked, and often multiple and provisional (39–40). As they say, "the stuff of autobiographical storytelling, then, is drawn from multiple, disparate and discontinuous experiences and the multiple identities constructed from and constructing those experiences" (40).

In this formulation, identity and life occupy similar positions as both process and product: they exist socially and historically, and interact dynamically. But "narrative" does not. It is assumed here that all lives are to be understood as narrativized: autobiography as narrative is what results from the attempt to arrange the chaotic process of identity formation into a causal framework. Paul John Eakin in his later work has claimed that this process does not even occur at the level of writing but at the level of living, so that identity formation is the result of narrative-building (Eakin 2008, 2). In Eakin's work in particular, we can see evidence of John Locke's contention that identity is the expression of consciousness that is continuous over time, but that identity is also a product, one's own property, which is a legal entity (Rak 2004, 4–5; Poster 2006, 101–8). Identity as we understand it today is the process of knowing oneself by an interplay of

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com